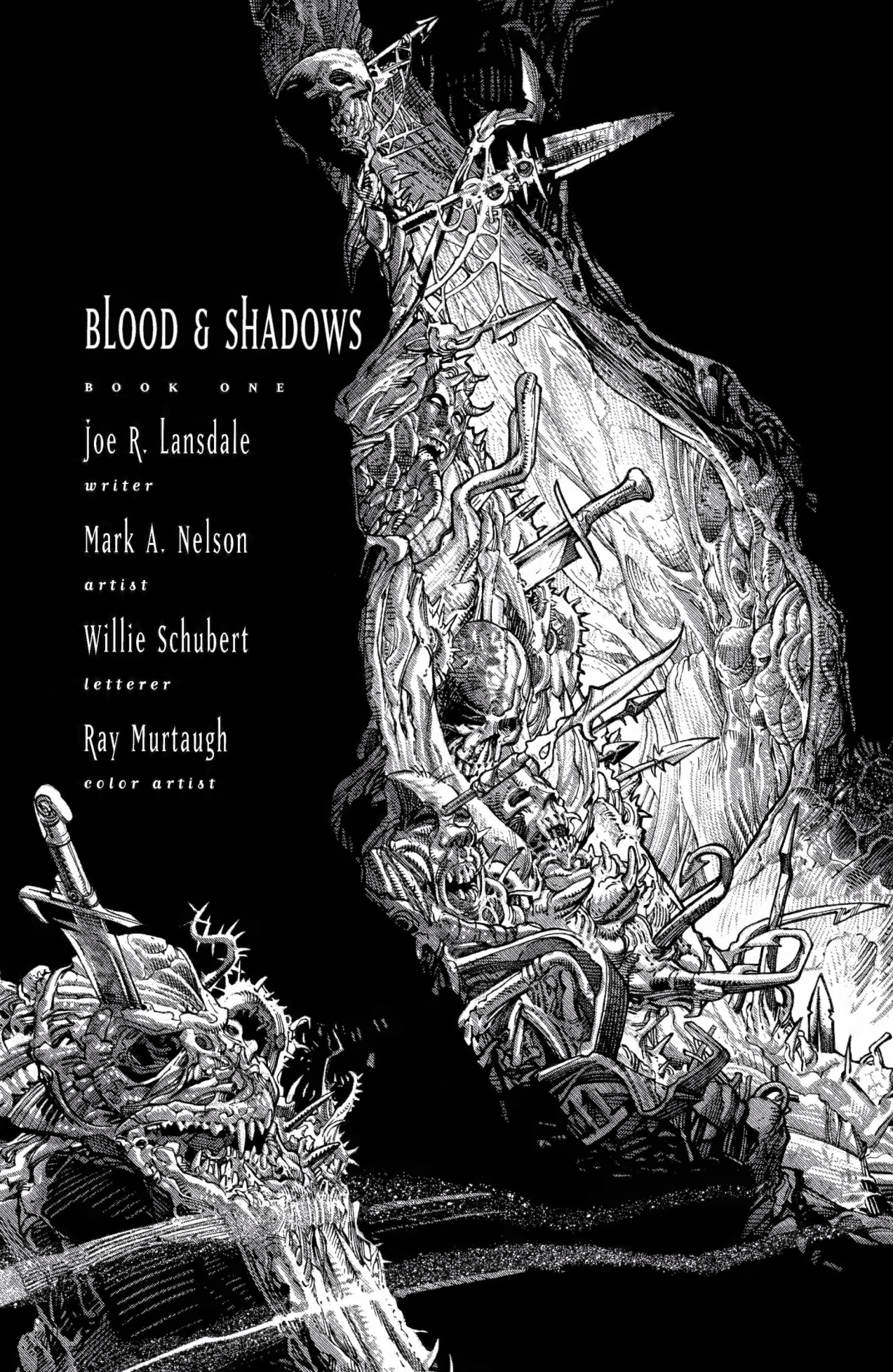
DC COMICS
VERTIGO

JOE R. LANSDALE

BLOOD AND SHADOWS

MARK A. NELSON



BLOOD & SHADOWS

BOOK ONE

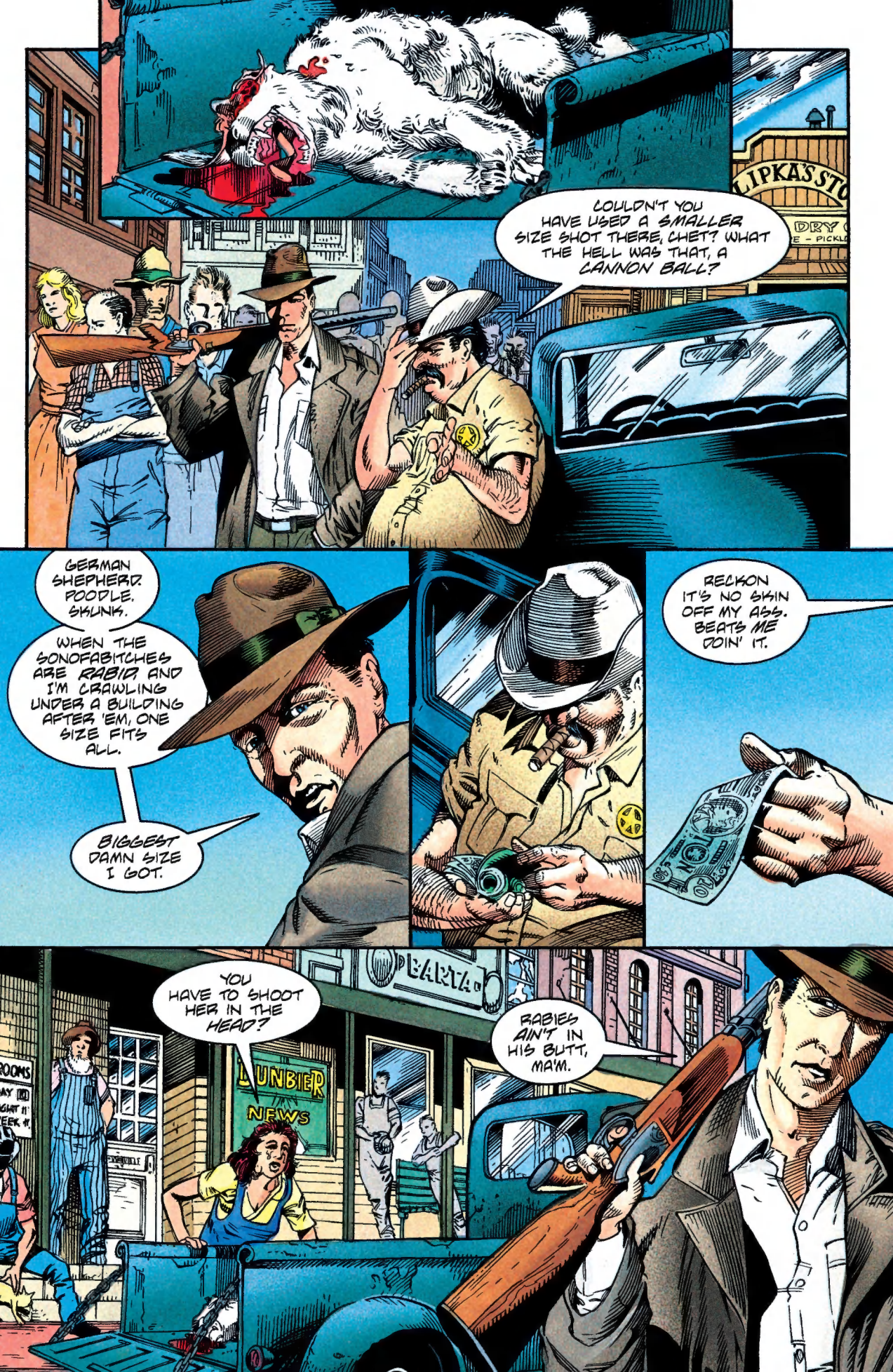
Joe R. Lansdale
writer

Mark A. Nelson
artist

Willie Schubert
letterer

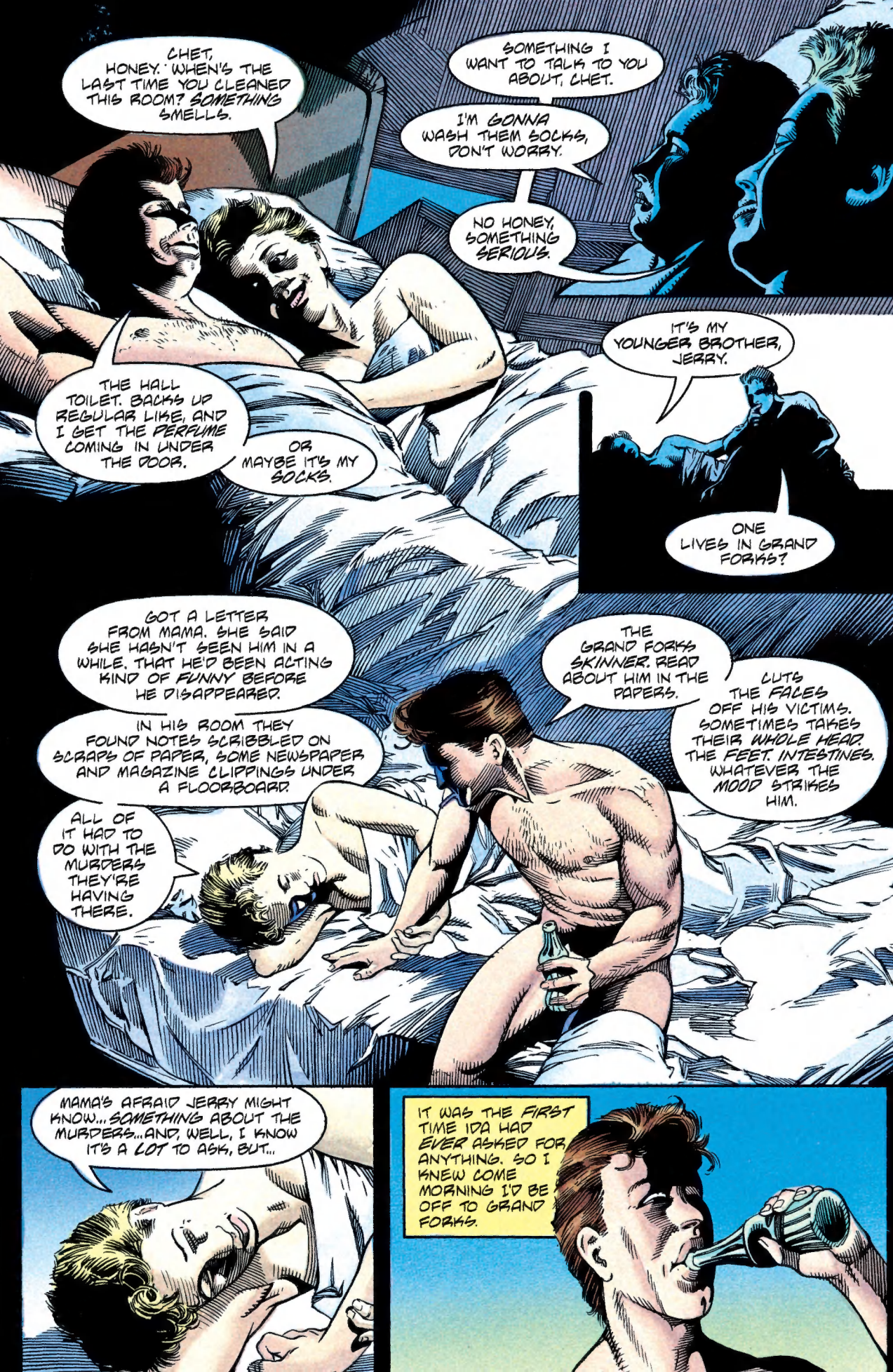
Ray Murtaugh
color artist

Mud Creek, east Texas town, 1946.
WEBB NEWS
KAREN'S SHOP
WHEN THEY GET MEAN, THEY GO FOR THEM DARK HOLES.
YEAH, AND I'M THE ONE GOES IN AFTER THEM.
FIFI!
WHUMP

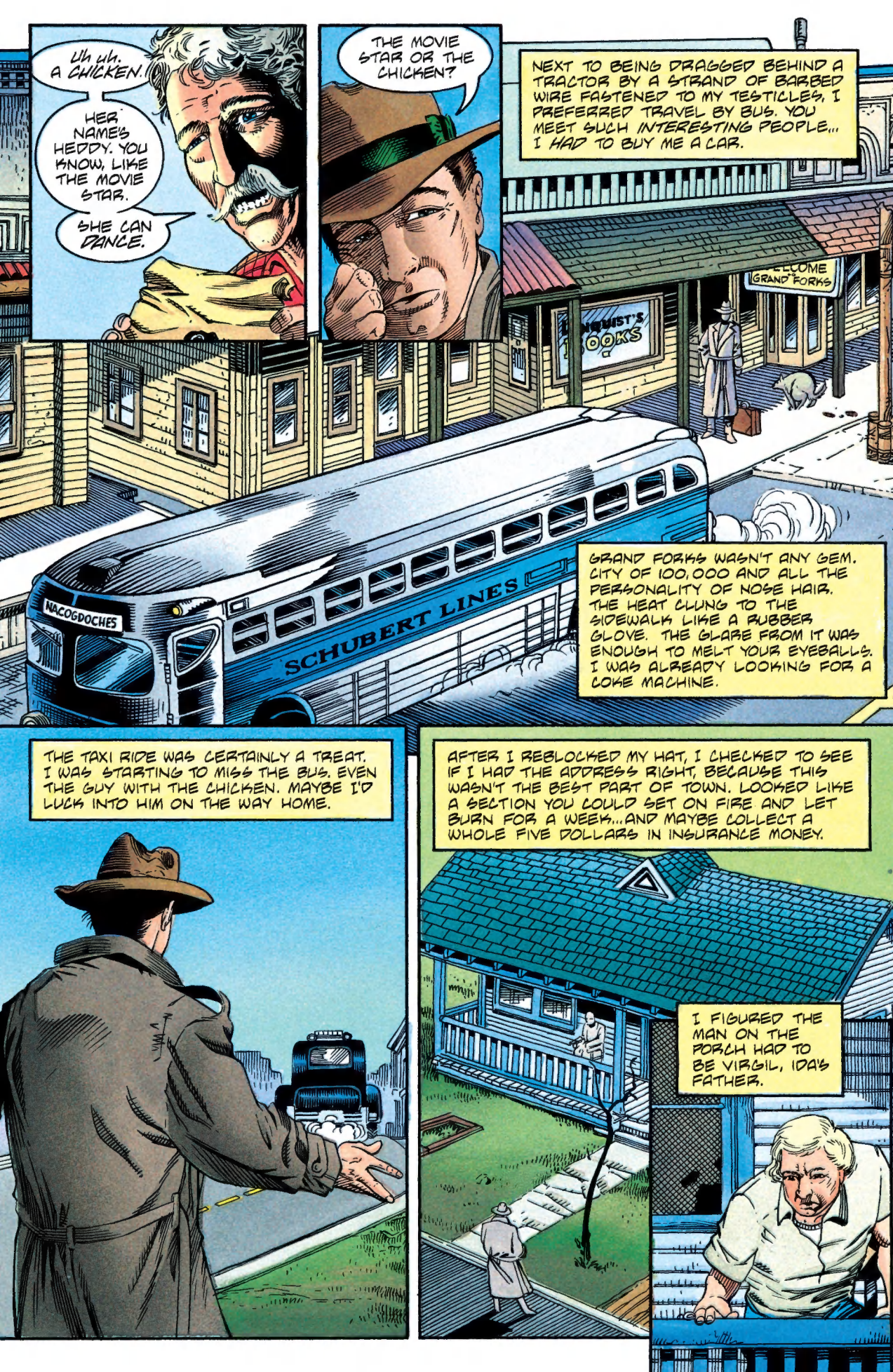

COULDN'T YOU HAVE USED A SMALLER SIZE SHOT THERE, CHET? WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT, A CANNON BALL?
GERMAN SHEPHERD. POODLE. SKUNK.
WHEN THE SONOFABITCHES ARE RABID AND I'M CRAWLING UNDER A BUILDING AFTER 'EM, ONE SIZE FITS ALL.
BIGGEST DAMN SIZE I GOT.
RECKON IT'S NO SKIN OFF MY ASS. BEATS ME DOIN' IT.
YOU HAVE TO SHOOT HER IN THE HEAD?
RABIES AIN'T IN HIS BUTT, MA'M.
LUNBIER
NEWS

HIGH NOON. MA SHINER'S BOARDING HOUSE. ALL THE OTHER BOOMERS GO IN THROUGH THE FRONT. NOT ME. I'M SPECIAL. I SNEAK IN THROUGH THE BACK.
MA SHINER
CAN'T WAIT TO GET TO MY ROOM. IT'S ABOUT THE SIZE OF A BROOM CLOSET. NO HOT MEALS SERVED. NO CLEAN SHEETS. NO RATS SMALLER THAN A HOUSE CAT.
BEATS STEPPING ON A TACK, THOUGH.
BUT JUST BARELY.
HOWDY, MA'M.
THAT STILL LEAVES TWO MONTHS' RENT, MISTER DALY.
YEAH, I WOULDN'T WANT TO LOSE THIS.
SLUGH
COKE

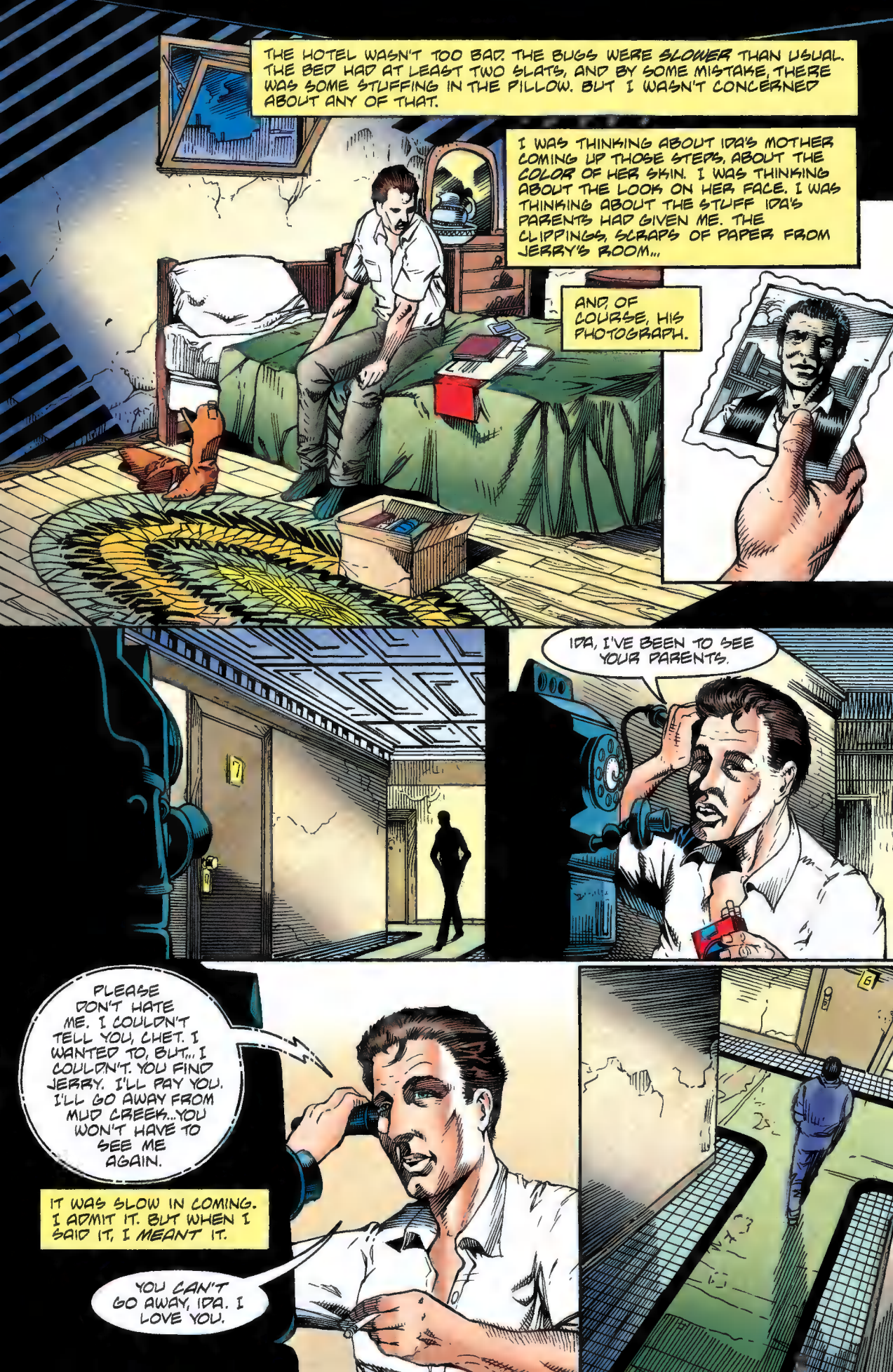
YOU CAN ONLY ENJOY A FINE HOME LIFE FOR SO LONG...
NYBERG
cafe
...FOR MY USUAL GREASY CHEESE SANDWICH, COLD CO'COLA.
...AND IDA.
THEN IT GETS ON YOUR GODDAMN NERVES. SO, COME SUPPERTIME, I LIKE TO ANKLE ON OVER TO THE CAFE.
HOW'S YOUR DAY BEEN, HONEY?
DVORAK'S
DINE & DANCE
THAT'S WHAT I LIKE ABOUT YOU, CHETLY, YOUR ROMANTIC VIEW OF LIFE.
THEY DON'T COME NO BETTER. RABID POODLES AT TEN DOLLARS A POP. KIND WORDS FROM THE SHERIFF AND THE DOG'S OWNER.
WORD IS BUD WAYNE IS GONNA PAY ME THAT FIFTY CENTS HE OWES ME SOME TIME SOON. AIN'T NOTHING LIKE BEING RESPECTED AND IN THE BIG MONEY.


CHET, HONEY. WHEN'S THE LAST TIME YOU CLEANED THIS ROOM? SOMETHING SMELLS.
SOMETHING I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT, CHET.
I'M GONNA WASH THEM SOCKS, DON'T WORRY.
NO HONEY, SOMETHING SERIOUS.
THE HALL TOILET. BACKS UP REGULAR LIKE, AND I GET THE PERFUME COMING IN UNDER THE DOOR.
OR MAYBE IT'S MY SOCKS.
IT'S MY YOUNGER BROTHER, JERRY.
ONE LIVES IN GRAND FORKS?
GOT A LETTER FROM MAMA. SHE SAID SHE HASN'T SEEN HIM IN A WHILE. THAT HE'D BEEN ACTING KIND OF FUNNY BEFORE HE DISAPPEARED.
IN HIS ROOM THEY FOUND NOTES SCRIBBLED ON SCRAPS OF PAPER, SOME NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINE CLIPPINGS UNDER A FLOORBOARD.
ALL OF IT HAD TO DO WITH THE MURDERS THEY'RE HAVING THERE.
THE GRAND FORKS SKINNER. READ ABOUT HIM IN THE PAPERS.
CUTS THE FACES OFF HIS VICTIMS. SOMETIMES TAKES THEIR WHOLE HEAD. THE FEET. INTESTINES. WHATEVER THE MOOD STRIKES HIM.
MAMA'S AFRAID JERRY MIGHT KNOW... SOMETHING ABOUT THE MURDERS... AND, WELL, I KNOW IT'S A LOT TO ASK, BUT...
IT WAS THE FIRST TIME IDA HAD EVER ASKED FOR ANYTHING. SO I KNEW COME MORNING I'D BE OFF TO GRAND FORKS.

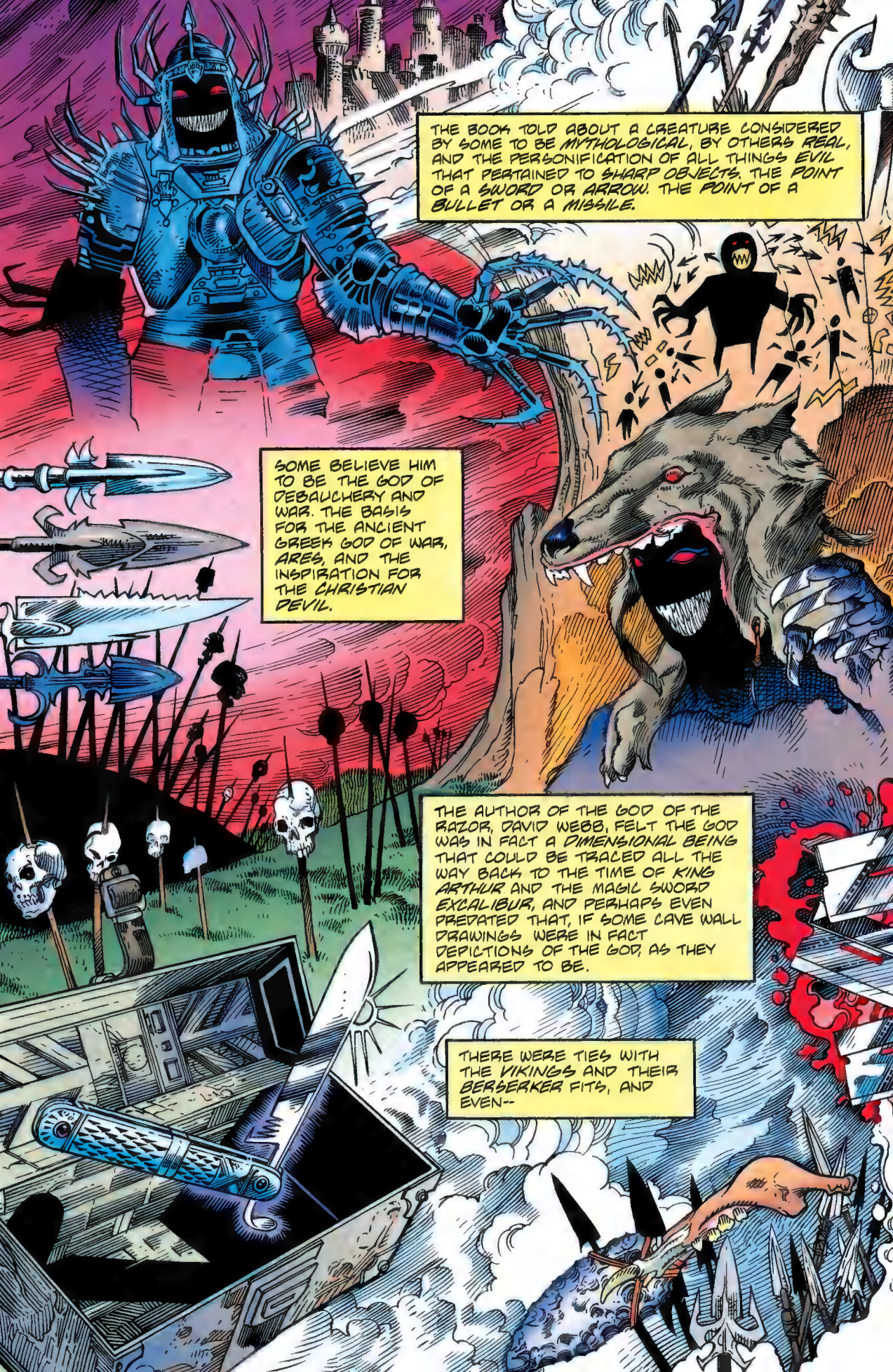
I'LL BE GONE A FEW DAYS. LONG AS IT TAKES TO FIND JERRY.
BUS
MANAGER: GORMAN
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, HONEY... AND THANKS.
MON'N, MIZZ IDA.
MORNING.
KNOW WHAT I GOT IN THE SACK?
YOUR LUNCH?


Uh uh. A CHICKEN.
HER NAME'S HEDDY. YOU KNOW, LIKE THE MOVIE STAR.
SHE CAN DANCE.
THE MOVIE STAR OR THE CHICKEN?
NEXT TO BEING DRAGGED BEHIND A TRACTOR BY A STRAND OF BARBED WIRE FASTENED TO MY TESTICLES, I PREFERRED TRAVEL BY BUS. YOU MEET SUCH INTERESTING PEOPLE... I HAD TO BUY ME A CAR.
GRAND FORKS
SCHUBERT LINES
NACOGDOCHES
GRAND FORKS WASN'T ANY GEM. CITY OF 100,000 AND ALL THE PERSONALITY OF NOSE HAIR. THE HEAT CLUNG TO THE SIDEWALK LIKE A RUBBER GLOVE. THE GLARE FROM IT WAS ENOUGH TO MELT YOUR EYEBALLS. I WAS ALREADY LOOKING FOR A COKE MACHINE.
THE TAXI RIDE WAS CERTAINLY A TREAT. I WAS STARTING TO MISS THE BUS. EVEN THE GUY WITH THE CHICKEN. MAYBE I'D LUCK INTO HIM ON THE WAY HOME.
AFTER I REBLOCKED MY HAT, I CHECKED TO SEE IF I HAD THE ADDRESS RIGHT, BECAUSE THIS WASN'T THE BEST PART OF TOWN. LOOKED LIKE A SECTION YOU COULD SET ON FIRE AND LET BURN FOR A WEEK...AND MAYBE COLLECT A WHOLE FIVE DOLLARS IN INSURANCE MONEY.
I FIGURED THE MAN ON THE PORCH HAD TO BE VIRGIL, IDA'S FATHER.

VIRGIL STOKES?
THAT'S RIGHT. YOU MUST BE CHET. IDA CALLED, SAID YOU WAS COMING.
HOT AS IT IS, MIGHT OUGHT TO SIT OUT HERE ON THE PORCH. TAKE YOU A PLACE.
...BUT DON'T LET THAT OLE SPRING PUNCH YOU IN THE ASS.
AFTER JERRY WAS GONE A WHILE WE GOT WORRIED. TOOK IT ON OURSELVES TO LOOK IN HIS ROOM, SEE IF WE COULD FIGURE SOMETHING OUT FROM THE THINGS HE MIGHT HAVE LEFT.
THINGS WE FOUND IN THERE MADE US REAL SCARED, MISTER DALY.
YOU CALL THE COPS?
NOT AFTER WE SEEN WHAT WE SEEN, WE FIGURE THE COPS WILL TAKE IT WRONG.
THIS PART OF TOWN, THEY ALWAYS THINK THE WORST. JERRY KNOWS SOMETHING ABOUT THEM MURDERS, THAT'S FOR SURE, BUT HE AIN'T KILLING NOBODY.
MAMA. THIS HERE IS IDA'S BOYFRIEND, MISTER DALY.
SO YOU'RE THE ONE'S GONNA FIND OUR BOY?


THE HOTEL WASN'T TOO BAD. THE BUGS WERE SLOWER THAN USUAL. THE BED HAD AT LEAST TWO SLATS, AND BY SOME MISTAKE, THERE WAS SOME STUFFING IN THE PILLOW. BUT I WASN'T CONCERNED ABOUT ANY OF THAT.
I WAS THINKING ABOUT IDA'S MOTHER COMING UP THOSE STEPS, ABOUT THE COLOR OF HER SKIN. I WAS THINKING ABOUT THE LOOK ON HER FACE. I WAS THINKING ABOUT THE STUFF IDA'S PARENTS HAD GIVEN ME. THE CLIPPINGS, SCRAPS OF PAPER FROM JERRY'S ROOM...
AND, OF COURSE, HIS PHOTOGRAPH.
7
IDA, I'VE BEEN TO SEE YOUR PARENTS.
PLEASE DON'T HATE ME. I COULDN'T TELL YOU, CHET. I WANTED TO, BUT... I COULDN'T. YOU FIND JERRY. I'LL PAY YOU. I'LL GO AWAY FROM MUD CREEK...YOU WON'T HAVE TO SEE ME AGAIN.
IT WAS SLOW IN COMING. I ADMIT IT. BUT WHEN I SAID IT, I MEANT IT.
YOU CAN'T GO AWAY, IDA. I LOVE YOU.
6

HAD I KNOWN IDA WAS PART COLORED, I'D NEVER HAVE HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH HER. THE TOWN WOULDN'T HAVE EITHER. MORE I THOUGHT ABOUT IT, MORE I WAS GLAD SHE'D FOOLED ME. THAT WAY I'D LEARNED ABOUT THE SIZE OF HER HEART BEFORE I LEARNED WHAT COLORS SHE WAS MIXED FROM.
I LAID OUT JERRY'S COLLECTION. IN SPITE OF VIRGIL'S FAITH IN HIS SON'S INNOCENCE, I GOT ANOTHER PICTURE. I FELT LIKE I WAS TAKING A LOOK INTO THE MIND OF A MAD KILLER.
STALKER TAKES SIXTH VICTIM
POLICE BAFFLED!
FACE OF NO.4 NOT FOUND!
SGT. RICE
THERE WERE SEVERAL STRANGE BOOKS IN THE BOX. THE FIRST ONE, THE BOOK OF DOCHES, DIDN'T HAVE MUCH.
THE SECOND, FOLLOWER OF THE RAZOR, MADE MY HAIR STAND ON END. IT TOLD ABOUT A DIMENSIONAL CREATURE CALLED...
...THE GOD OF THE RAZOR... THE GOD OF SWORDS... GOD OF BLADES. ANYTHING SHARP, RIGHT DOWN TO A PAPER CUT.


THE BOOK TOLD ABOUT A CREATURE CONSIDERED BY SOME TO BE MYTHOLOGICAL, BY OTHERS REAL, AND THE PERSONIFICATION OF ALL THINGS EVIL THAT PERTAINED TO SHARP OBJECTS. THE POINT OF A SWORD OR ARROW. THE POINT OF A BULLET OR A MISSILE.
SOME BELIEVE HIM TO BE THE GOD OF DEBAUCHERY AND WAR. THE BASIS FOR THE ANCIENT GREEK GOD OF WAR, ARES, AND THE INSPIRATION FOR THE CHRISTIAN DEVIL.
THE AUTHOR OF THE GOD OF THE RAZOR, DAVID WEBB, FELT THE GOD WAS IN FACT A DIMENSIONAL BEING THAT COULD BE TRACED ALL THE WAY BACK TO THE TIME OF KING ARTHUR AND THE MAGIC SWORD EXCALIBUR, AND PERHAPS EVEN PREDATED THAT, IF SOME CAVE WALL DRAWINGS WERE IN FACT DEPICTIONS OF THE GOD, AS THEY APPEARED TO BE.
THERE WERE TIES WITH THE VIKINGS AND THEIR BERSERKER FITS, AND EVEN--

--WITH *LIZZIE BORDEN*, *HITLER*, AND *JACK THE RIPPER*, AND AS I TURNED THE PAGES I FOUND SOMETHING ELSE.

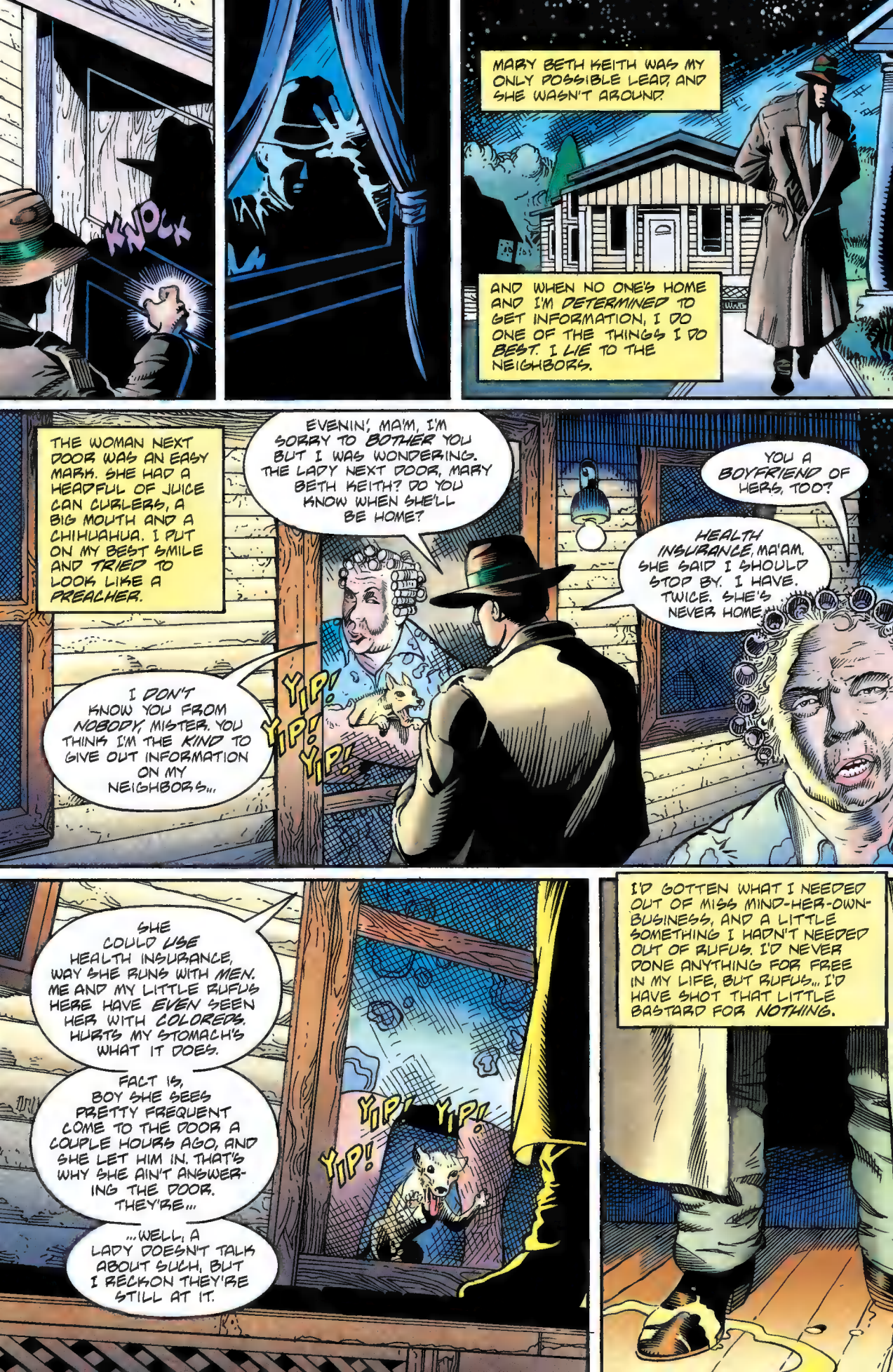
A LITTLE, BLACK, *ADDRESS BOOK* BEING USED AS BOOK MARKER.

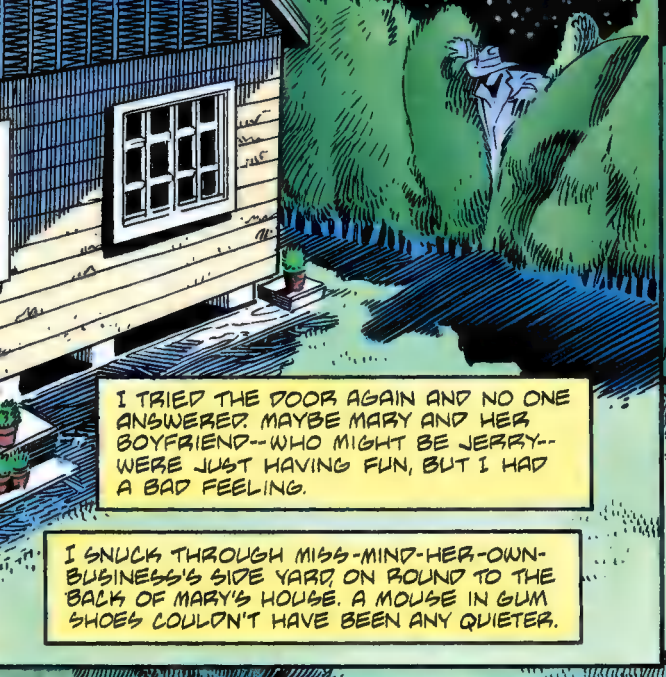
I FLIPPED THROUGH IT. ALL THE NAMES WERE MARKED OUT. EXCEPT ONE. *MARY BETH KEITH.*

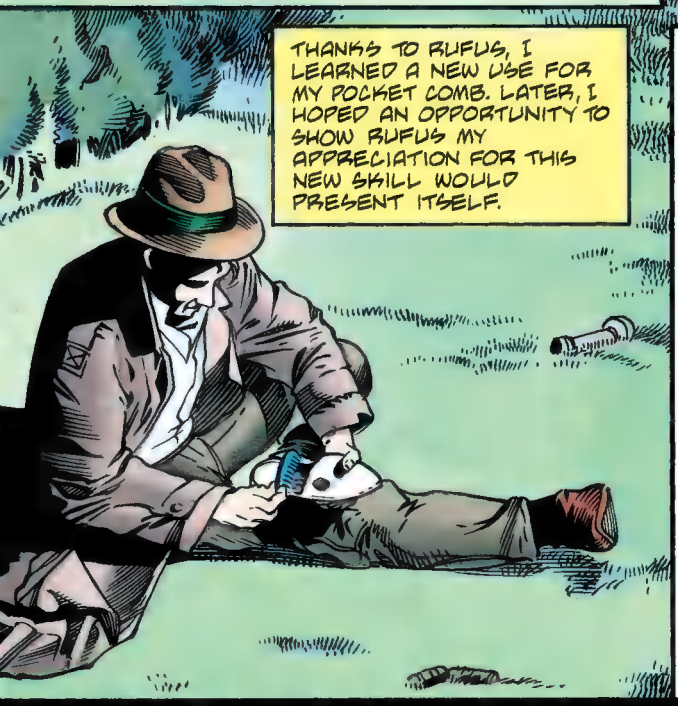
THE *THREE HEARTS* BY HER NAME MADE ME REALIZE *IMMEDIATELY* THIS WAS WHAT WE IN THE *DETECTIVE TRADE* CALLED A *CLUE*. I CALLED UP A RENTAL PLACE AND GOT A CAR BROUGHT OVER. I CONSULTED A MAP, DROVE ON OVER TO SYCAMORE.

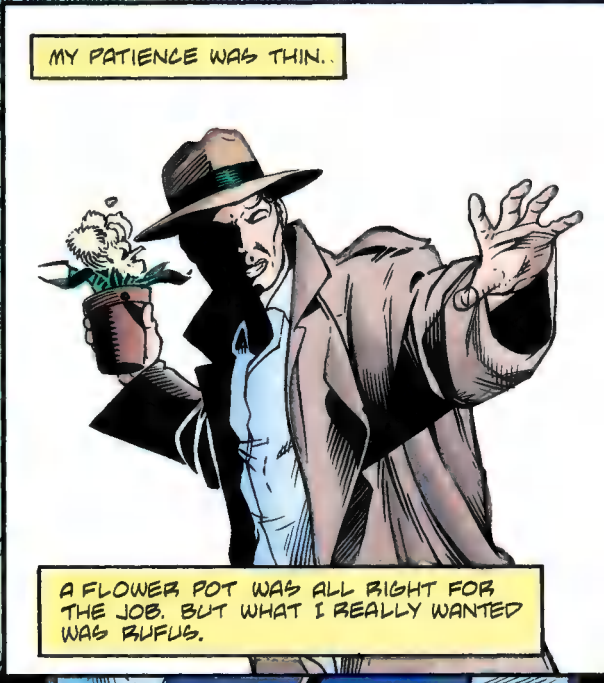
MARY BETH LIVED IN A BETTER PART OF TOWN THAN JERRY. HERE THE GARBAGE GOT COLLECTED, AND IF SOMEONE GOT *SHOT* IN THE STREET, THE FIRE DEPARTMENT WOULD SHOW UP EVENTUALLY TO *HOSE DOWN* THE *BLOOD*.

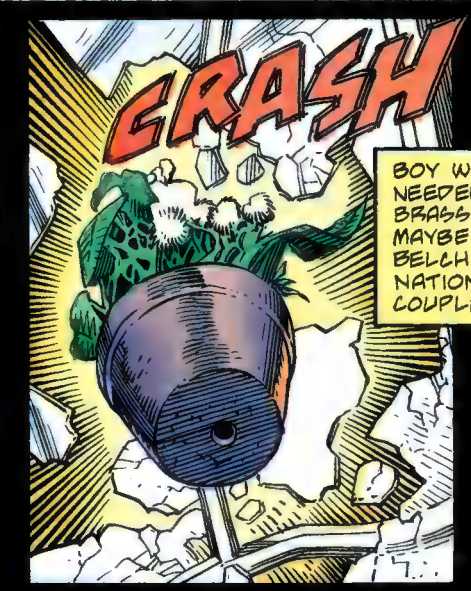
I'D LEARNED SOME LESSONS ABOUT *LOVE* TODAY. IT *DOESN'T* REALLY CARE ABOUT COLOR. SO IT DIDN'T SHOCK ME THAT JERRY, THE MIXED BLOOD, MIGHT HAVE HIM A WHITE COUNTESS ON THE BETTER SIDE OF TOWN. *HAD* TO BE THAT WAY. SYCAMORE DAMN SURE WASN'T AN AREA WHERE A COLORED WOMAN WOULD BE *ALLOWED* TO LIVE.


KNOCK
MARY BETH KEITH WAS MY ONLY POSSIBLE LEAD, AND SHE WASN'T AROUND.
AND WHEN NO ONE'S HOME AND I'M DETERMINED TO GET INFORMATION, I DO ONE OF THE THINGS I DO BEST. I LIE TO THE NEIGHBORS.
THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR WAS AN EASY MARK. SHE HAD A HEADFUL OF JUICE CAN CURLERS, A BIG MOUTH AND A CHIHUAHUA. I PUT ON MY BEST SMILE AND TRIED TO LOOK LIKE A PREACHER.
EVENIN', MA'M, I'M SORRY TO BOTHER YOU BUT I WAS WONDERING. THE LADY NEXT DOOR, MARY BETH KEITH? DO YOU KNOW WHEN SHE'LL BE HOME?
YOU A BOYFRIEND OF HERS, TOO?
HEALTH INSURANCE, MA'AM. SHE SAID I SHOULD STOP BY. I HAVE. TWICE. SHE'S NEVER HOME.
I DON'T KNOW YOU FROM NOBODY, MISTER. YOU THINK I'M THE KIND TO GIVE OUT INFORMATION ON MY NEIGHBORS...
YIP! YIP! YIP!
SHE COULD USE HEALTH INSURANCE, WAY SHE RUNS WITH MEN. ME AND MY LITTLE RUFUS HERE HAVE EVEN SEEN HER WITH COLOREDS. HURTS MY STOMACH'S WHAT IT DOES.
FACT IS, BOY SHE SEES PRETTY FREQUENT COME TO THE DOOR A COUPLE HOURS AGO, AND SHE LET HIM IN. THAT'S WHY SHE AIN'T ANSWERING THE DOOR. THEY'RE...
...WELL, A LADY DOESN'T TALK ABOUT SUCH, BUT I RECKON THEY'RE STILL AT IT.
YIP! YIP! YIP!
I'D GOTTEN WHAT I NEEDED OUT OF MISS MIND-HER-OWN-BUSINESS, AND A LITTLE SOMETHING I HADN'T NEEDED OUT OF RUFUS. I'D NEVER DONE ANYTHING FOR FREE IN MY LIFE, BUT RUFUS... I'D HAVE SHOT THAT LITTLE BASTARD FOR NOTHING.


I TRIED THE DOOR AGAIN AND NO ONE ANSWERED. MAYBE MARY AND HER BOYFRIEND--WHO MIGHT BE JERRY--WERE JUST HAVING FUN, BUT I HAD A BAD FEELING.


I SNUCK THROUGH MISS-MIND-HER-OWN-BUSINESS'S SIDE YARD ON ROUND TO THE BACK OF MARY'S HOUSE. A MOUSE IN GUM SHOES COULDN'T HAVE BEEN ANY QUIETER.
THANKS TO RUFUS, I LEARNED A NEW USE FOR MY POCKET COMB. LATER, I HOPED AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW RUFUS MY APPRECIATION FOR THIS NEW SKILL WOULD PRESENT ITSELF.


MY PATIENCE WAS THIN..
A FLOWER POT WAS ALL RIGHT FOR THE JOB. BUT WHAT I REALLY WANTED WAS RUFUS.


CRASH
BOY WAS I SNEAKY. ALL I NEEDED NOW WAS A SIREN, A BRASS BAND AND A STRIPPER, MAYBE DO A LITTLE FART AND BELCH VERSION OF THE NATIONAL ANTHEM. SET OFF A COUPLE ROMAN CANDLES...

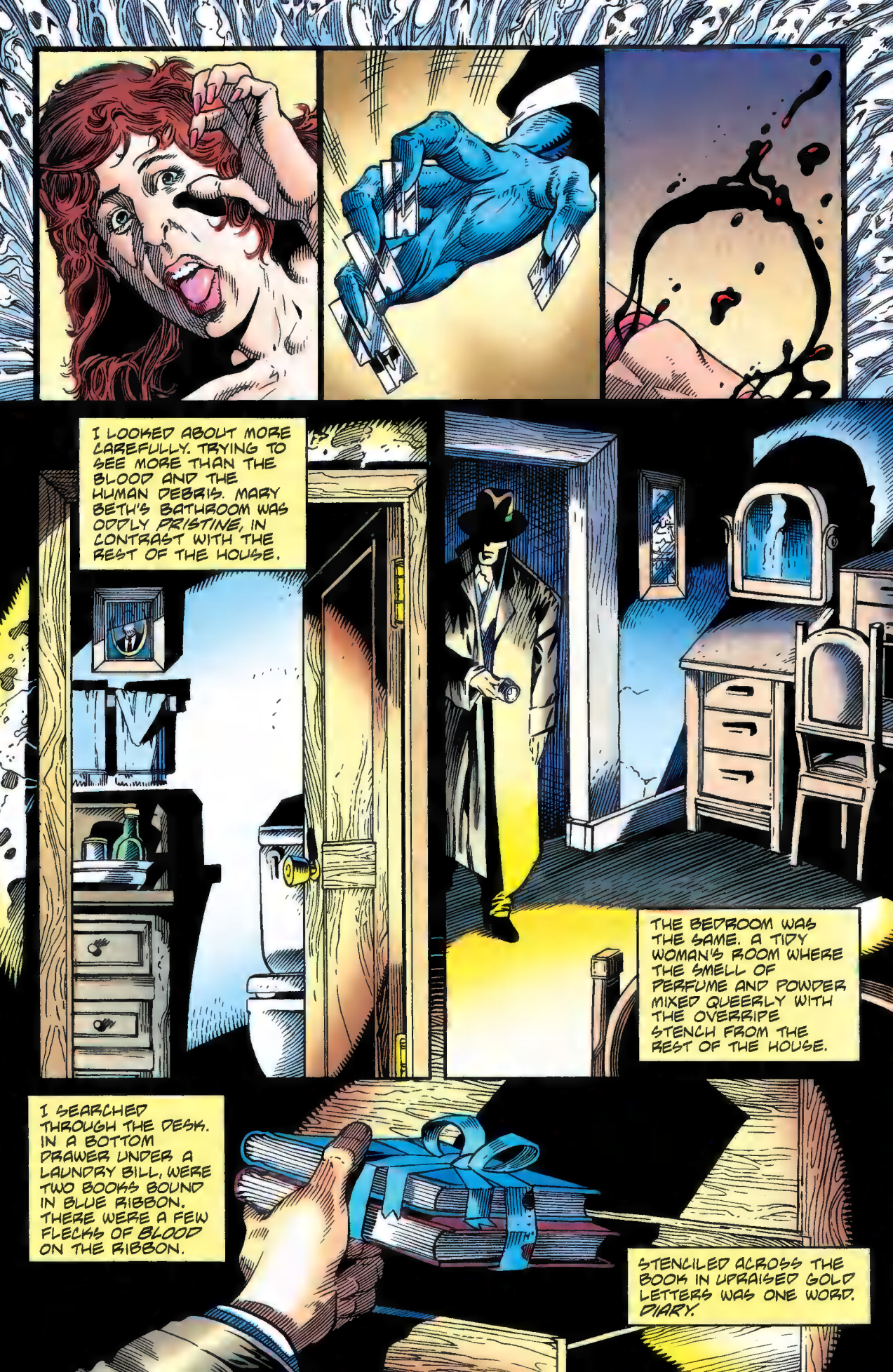
AN ODOR I'D SMELLED BEFORE, THOUGH LESS POTENT, FLED FROM THE HOUSE AND FILLED MY NOSTRILS AND ROLLED MY STOMACH. NECROPOLIS PERFUME.
IN FOR A PENNY, IN FOR A POUND.

OH GOD, HOW WAS I GOING TO TELL IDA WHAT I FEARED ALL ALONG. HER BROTHER WAS THE SKINNER.

I'D RATHER HAVE CIRCUMCISED MYSELF WITH RUSTY NAIL CLIPPERS THAN STAY IN THAT CHARNEL HOUSE...
...BUT I GOT HOLD OF THE FLASH-LIGHT AND HITCHED UP MY COURAGE AND KEPT ON GOING.
EACH ROOM WAS FILLED WITH HORRORS.
BUT THE KITCHEN HELD SOMETHING SPECIAL...
JERRY WASN'T THE SKINNER.
QUITE THE CONTRARY. JERRY WAS SKINNED.
THE SKINNER HAD COME IN HERE AND KILLED JERRY, NOT MUCH OVER TWO HOURS AGO, AND LEFT UNDETECTED. MISS KNOW-IT-ALL AND RUFUS THE PISSER HADN'T BEEN AS ON GUARD AS THEY THOUGHT.
MEAT PACKING
I THOUGHT ABOUT THAT AND FELT QUEASY. I'D MISSED HIM TOO. AND PROBABLY NOT BY MUCH. WORSE YET, THIS LOOKED LIKE HIS HEADQUARTERS.
SODAS — 2¢
MAGAZINES — 5¢
CIGARETTES — 10¢
CANDY — 1¢
THAT THOUGHT FAILED TO CHEER ME. THAT MEANT HE'D BE BACK. I WONDER WHERE MARY'S BODY WAS. OR RATHER THE PIECES OF IT.

I DIDN'T HAVE THE HEART TO LOOK THROUGH THE CLOSET AGAIN, TO SEE IF HER FACE WAS THERE.
HEY, HONEY. WANT TO GET YOUR PIPES CLEANED OUT? AND I DON'T MEAN YOUR HOME PLUMBING.
NO OFFENSE, HONEY, BUT WITH A FACE LIKE THAT, I'M JUST THE KINDA GIRL YOU NEED.
I FIGURED THE SKINNER HAD LEFT A CLUE TO HIS IDENTITY BEHIND. MAYBE SEVERAL. I DIDN'T GET THE IMPRESSION HE WAS THE NEAT AND CAREFUL TYPE.
THAT STUFF IN THE BOOKS...
...ABOUT THE GOD OF THE RAZOR. I COULDN'T GET IT OUT OF MY MIND. WHAT HAD JERRY BEEN INVOLVED WITH?
COME ON, HONEY. TAKE IT OFF.
HEY, HONEY, THE FUNNY STUFF COSTS EXTRA.
WHAT WAS JERRY'S FASCINATION WITH ALL THIS?

NO HONEY. THIS WON'T COST ME A THING.
SNICK!
SNICK!


I LOOKED ABOUT MORE CAREFULLY. TRYING TO SEE MORE THAN THE BLOOD AND THE HUMAN DEBRIS. MARY BETH'S BATHROOM WAS ODDLY *PRISTINE*, IN CONTRAST WITH THE REST OF THE HOUSE.
THE BEDROOM WAS THE SAME. A TIDY WOMAN'S ROOM WHERE THE SMELL OF PERFUME AND POWDER MIXED QUEERLY WITH THE OVERRIPE STENCH FROM THE REST OF THE HOUSE.
I SEARCHED THROUGH THE DESK. IN A BOTTOM DRAWER UNDER A LAUNDRY BILL, WERE TWO BOOKS BOUND IN BLUE RIBBON. THERE WERE A FEW FLECKS OF *BLOOD* ON THE RIBBON.
STENCILED ACROSS THE BOOK IN UPRAISED GOLD LETTERS WAS ONE WORD. *DIARY.*

THE BLOOD FLECKS ON THE RIBBON COMPELLED ME TO EXAMINE THE DIARY. IT WAS THE USUAL YOUNG GIRL STUFF--
--UNTIL I CAME TO THE SECTION WRITTEN IN BLOOD. THIS STUFF TOOK THE PRIZE. THE MARQUIS De SADE WOULD HAVE BLUSHED AND BEEN ILL.
I SUDDENLY FELT VERY VULNERABLE AND *VERY ALONE*. I WOULD HAVE EVEN WELCOMED RUFUS'S COMPANY. WELL, MAYBE NOT.
WHAT THE HELL'S THAT WHORE DOING UP THERE? *DEMOLITION SEX?* BEST OF THE WHORES WON'T BE ABLE TO GET NO SLEEP.
YOU CAN'T TELL THOSE GALS TO QUIET IT DOWN JUST ONCE.
NO. YOU GOT TO ENGRAVE IT IN STONE FOR THEM. DELIVER IT FIRST-HAND. DROP IT ON THEIR HEAD.
OH GOD, BETTY GOT A *WEIRD* ONE!

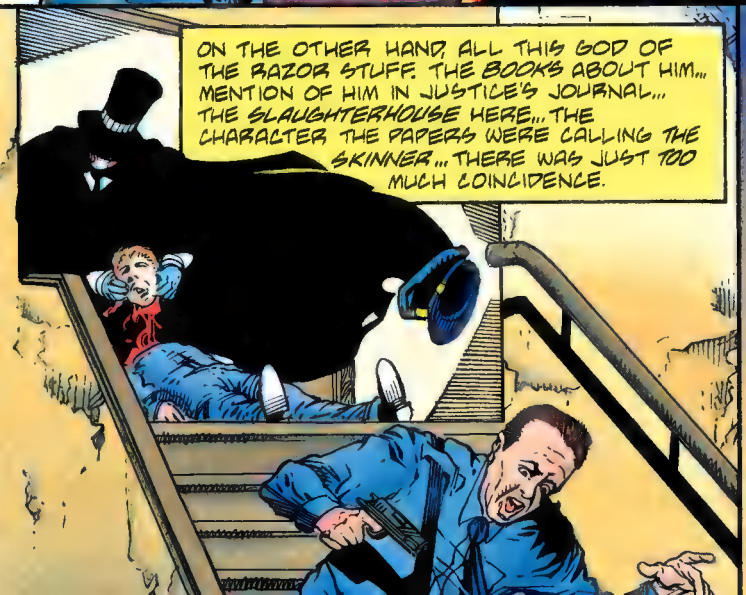
OPERATOR! OPERATOR! THIS IS THE DEEDS HOTEL. GET THE POLICE. WE GOT A CRAZY ONE!
THE DIARY DIDN'T GET ANY LIGHTER. NO ONE WOKE UP AT THE END AND IT WAS ALL A DREAM.
IN FACT, IT WAS ALL FALLING TOGETHER NOW. AND IT WASN'T FALLING IN ANY DIRECTION I HAD SUSPECTED.
I WASN'T GOING TO FIND MARY'S BODY, OR PARTS OF MARY'S BODY, IN THE HOUSE. SHE WASN'T IN THE HOUSE AT THE MOMENT.

SHE WAS OUT ON THE STREET, DOING GOD KNEW WHAT. *MORE* OF WHAT SHE HAD DONE HERE. SHE *WAS*, AT LEAST IN *HER MIND*, THE GOD OF THE RAZOR.
I BEGAN TO CROSS-HATCH BETWEEN IT AND MARY'S DIARY, THE SECTIONS SHE HAD WRITTEN IN INK, AND THOSE SHE HAD WRITTEN IN BLOOD. MARY DISCUSSED THE CONTENTS OF THE JOURNAL IN THE DIARY. IT HAD BELONGED TO JERRY'S GRAND-FATHER, JUSTICE JONES.
THE BOOK WITH THE DIARY WAS AN OLD HANDWRITTEN JOURNAL. THE FLY PAGE READ: *THE TRUE WORDS OF JUSTICE JONES, FORMER SOLDIER AND SCOUT, AS TOLD BY HIS OWNSELF IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1876.*
BETTER USE THEM *GUNS!* HE AIN'T PRETTY! I TELL YOU, HE'S MEAN! I WAS YOUNGER, I'D GO UP WITH YOU. IF I HAD A *SHOTGUN*. LOTS OF BACKUP AMMO. A *GRENADE* OR SOMETHING.
I COULD SEE WHY JERRY HAD GIVEN IT TO HER. HE WANTED MARY TO KNOW AND RESPECT HIS NEGRO HERITAGE.
WANTED HER TO KNOW NOT ALL COLORED FOLKS HAD BEEN COOKS AND PORTERS. THAT THEIR HISTORY HAD YET TO BE WRITTEN. JUSTICE HAD BEEN *QUITE* A GUY.
BAM
BAM BAM
BUT ACCORDING TO HER DIARY, SHE LEARNED SOME OTHER THINGS AS WELL. SHE LEARNED HOW JERRY'S GRANDFATHER HAD ENCOUNTERED THE GOD OF THE RAZOR IN THE *1870's*.

SUDDENLY I THOUGHT OLE JUSTICE WASN'T SUCH A GREAT GUY AFTER ALL. HE HAD TO BE A *LIAR*. AN UNPUBLISHED DIME NOVELIST OF THE ERA. EITHER THAT, OR HE WAS AS ADDLED AS A MOUSE IN A FRUIT JAR.

THE DIARY MADE IT OBVIOUS MARY BELIEVED SHE HAD FOUND A WAY TO *UNLEASH* THE GOD OF THE RAZOR, TO BE *POSSESSED* BY HIM, AND DO HIS WILL.
BAM BAM
BAM BAM

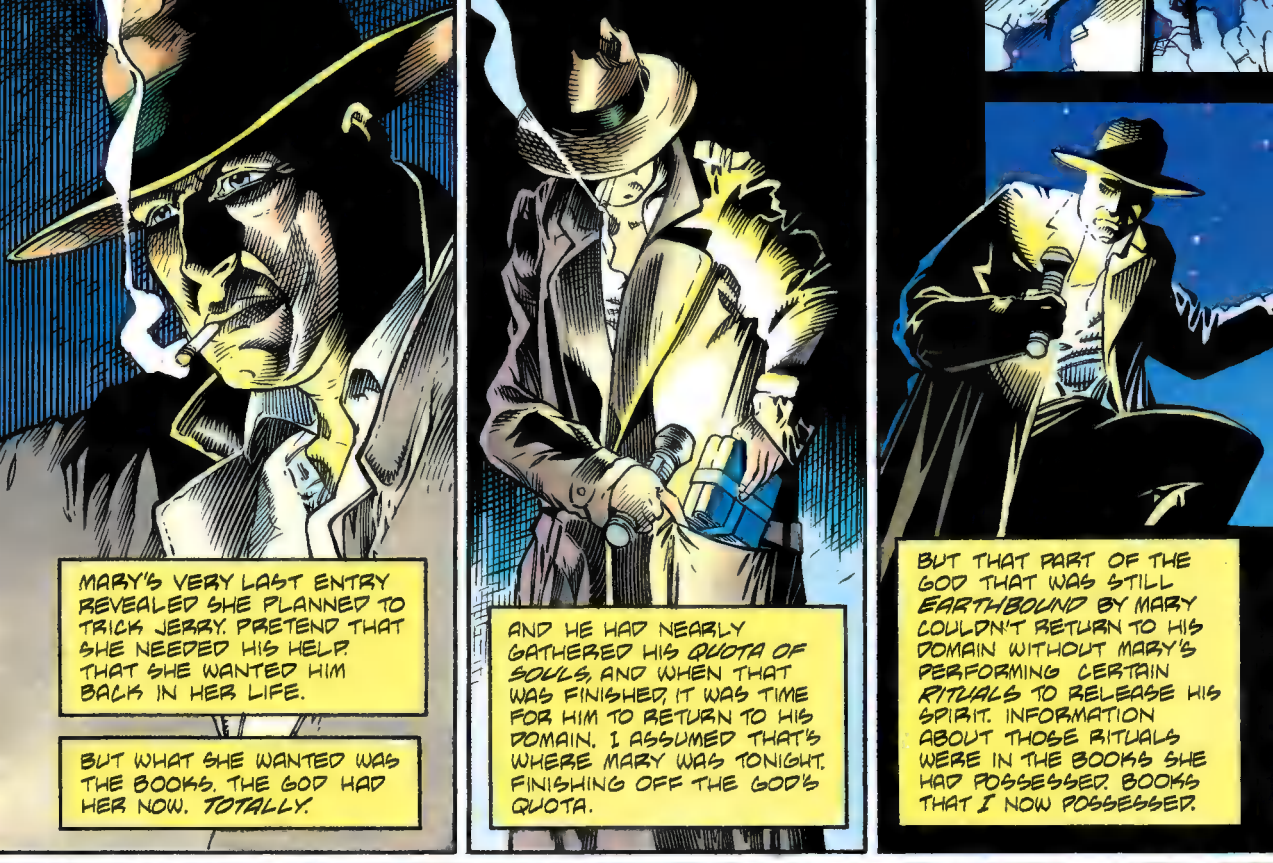
AND SHE HAD LEARNED THIS FROM THE BOOKS I NOW HAD IN MY POSSESSION. BOOKS SHE STOLE FROM A DALLAS, TEXAS LIBRARY. UH HUH, YOU BET.
SHE WAS THE GOD OF THE RAZOR, AND *I* WAS *IKE EISENHOWER*.


ON THE OTHER HAND, ALL THIS GOD OF THE RAZOR STUFF. THE *BOOKS* ABOUT HIM... MENTION OF HIM IN JUSTICE'S JOURNAL... THE *SLAUGHTERHOUSE* HERE... THE CHARACTER THE PAPERS WERE CALLING *THE SKINNER*... THERE WAS JUST *TOO* MUCH COINCIDENCE.

AND IF THERE WAS ONE THING I HAD LEARNED TO *DOUBT* IN MY LINE OF WORK, IT WAS TOO MUCH COINCIDENCE.

BUT THE GOD OF THE RAZOR?
THAT JUST COULD NOT BE...
NO WAY, JOSE.
...COULD IT?

HOWDY.


MARY'S VERY LAST ENTRY REVEALED SHE PLANNED TO TRICK JERRY. PRETEND THAT SHE NEEDED HIS HELP. THAT SHE WANTED HIM BACK IN HER LIFE.
BUT WHAT SHE WANTED WAS THE BOOKS. THE GOD HAD HER NOW. TOTALLY.
AND HE HAD NEARLY GATHERED HIS QUOTA OF SOULS, AND WHEN THAT WAS FINISHED, IT WAS TIME FOR HIM TO RETURN TO HIS DOMAIN. I ASSUMED THAT'S WHERE MARY WAS TONIGHT. FINISHING OFF THE GOD'S QUOTA.
BUT THAT PART OF THE GOD THAT WAS STILL EARTHBOUND BY MARY COULDN'T RETURN TO HIS DOMAIN WITHOUT MARY'S PERFORMING CERTAIN RITUALS TO RELEASE HIS SPIRIT. INFORMATION ABOUT THOSE RITUALS WERE IN THE BOOKS SHE HAD POSSESSED. BOOKS THAT I NOW POSSESSED.

THAT'S WHAT JERRY WAS FOR. TO TELL HER WHERE HE HAD HIDDEN THE BOOKS. I ASSUMED HE HAD REVEALED HIS HIDING PLACE EASILY ENOUGH. RIGHT BEFORE SHE FINISHED SKINNING HIM ALIVE.
WHICH MEANT AT SOME POINT, MARY'D BE HEADING OVER TO IDA'S PARENTS' HOUSE, WHERE SHE THOUGHT THE BOOKS WERE.

GODDAMN YOU, RUFUS!

AND THERE'S THE LITTLE DARLING NOW.

I THOUGHT I WAS FEELING BAD AS I COULD FEEL, BUT THE LAST PAGES OF MARY'S DIARY ASSURED ME I HAD A WAYS TO GO.
IT WAS SIMPLE REALLY. JERRY, HER LOVER, HAD BEEN ABANDONED BY HER AFTER SHE HAD STOLEN THE BOOKS FROM THE LIBRARY. THE GOD OF THE RAZOR BECAME HER OBSESSION.
JERRY THOUGHT SHE HAD SLIPPED A COG-- WAS KILLING UNDER THE DELUSION SHE WAS THE GOD OF THE RAZOR. HE HAD STOLEN THE GOD OF THE RAZOR BOOKS FROM HER, AND HIDDEN THEM.
PERHAPS HE THOUGHT REMOVING THE BOOKS WOULD BRING HER TO HER SENSES.
HIS PARENTS HAD FOUND THEM UNDER THE FLOORBOARD IN HIS ROOM, ALONG WITH THE CLIPPINGS AND THE SCRAPS OF PAPER WITH THE DIAGRAMS ON THEM, DIAGRAMS MARY HAD DRAWN FROM THE BOOKS.
I CAN'T LEAVE THIS ALL UP TO CHET. IT'S NOT FAIR. I LIED TO HIM. I MANIPULATED HIM.
BARRS
TAXI STAND
WELCOME TO
I'LL GO SEE MOM AND DAD. FIND OUT WHERE CHET'S STAYING. HE'S GOT TO KNOW HOW MUCH I LOVE HIM.

YIP! YIP! YIP! YIP! YIP! YIP! YIP!
YELP!
HAVE A NICE TRIP, YOU SONOFA-BITCH!
YOU KICKED RUFUS!
YES, MA'AM. AND I ENJOYED IT, TOO.
KICKING THAT DEFENSELESS LITTLE DOG RUFUS HADN'T SATISFIED ME AS MUCH AS I HAD EXPECTED. I SHOULD HAVE PAUSED LONG ENOUGH TO KICK HIM AT LEAST ONCE MORE. HE'D LOOKED DAMN GOOD SAILING OVER THOSE SHRUBS.
YOU'RE NO INSURANCE SALESMAN! I'M CALLING THE LAW.

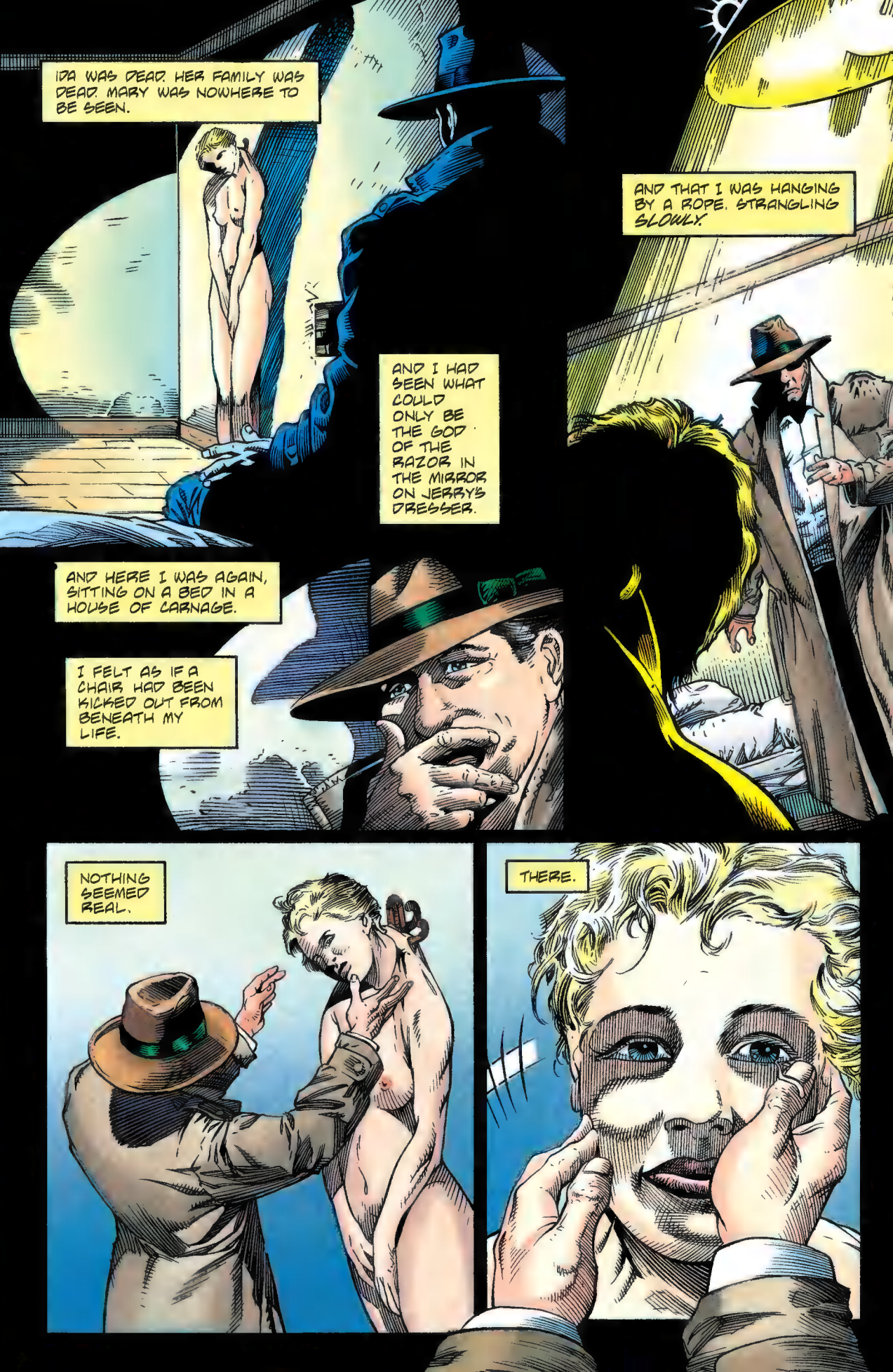
DUM DUM AG'ES CLEFT FOR ME, DUM DEE HIDE MYSELF 'N THEE
DUM DEE WATER AND THE BLOOD
KNOCK KNOCK
HEY, HEY! SAVE THE WOOD, WOULD YOU?

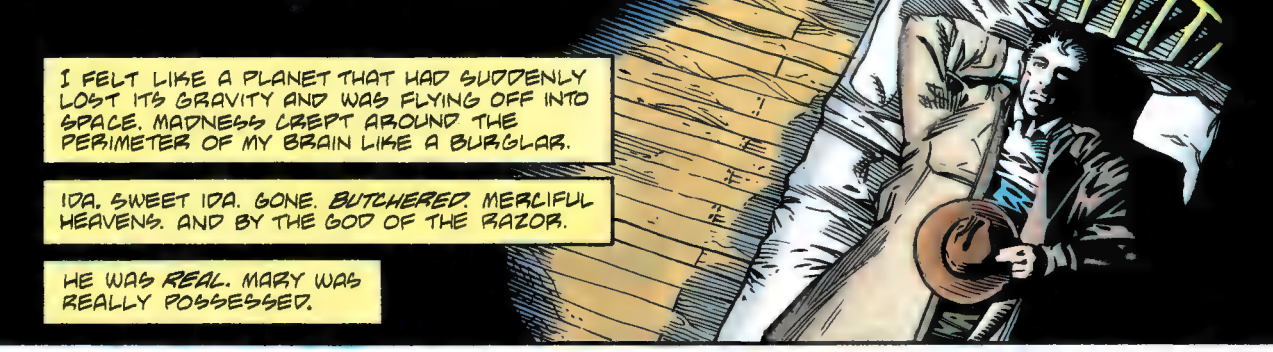
EVENING, MISTER STOKES.
I'VE COME TO BORROW A BOOK!
SNICK!
250

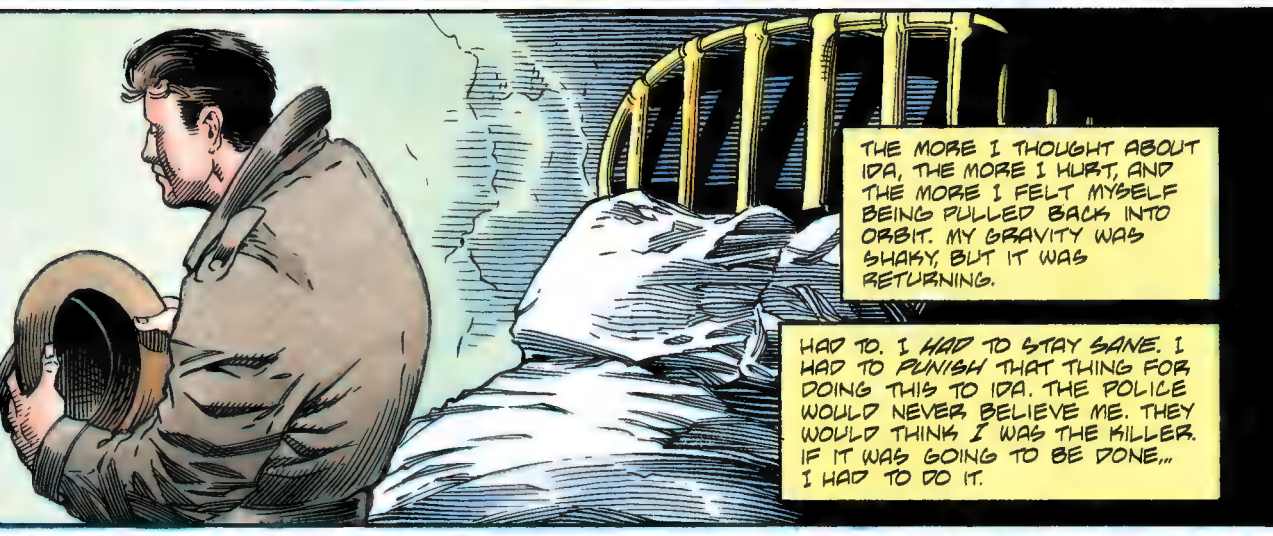
SWEET JESUS.

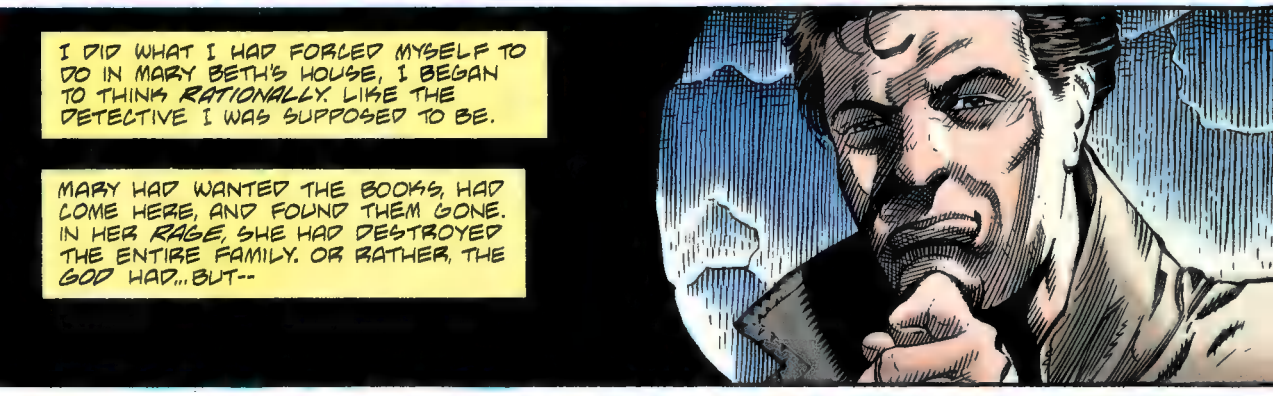
IDA?

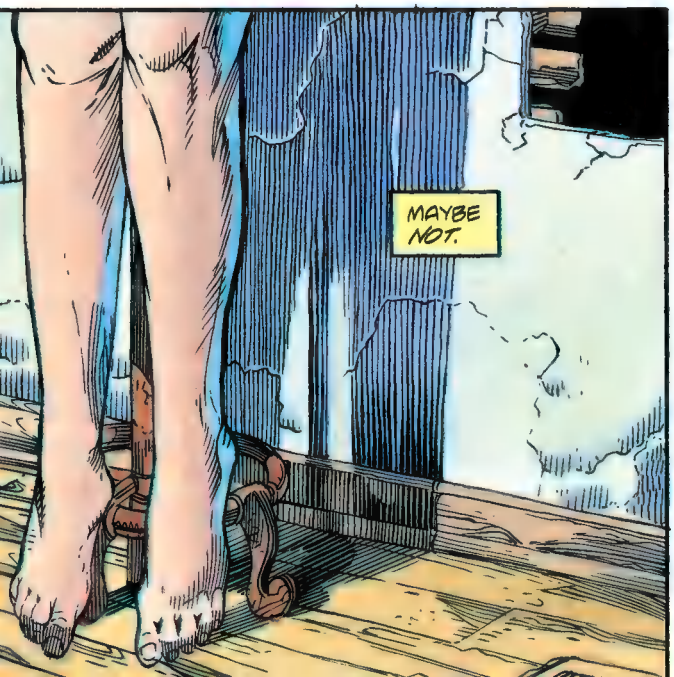
IDA?
HONEY...

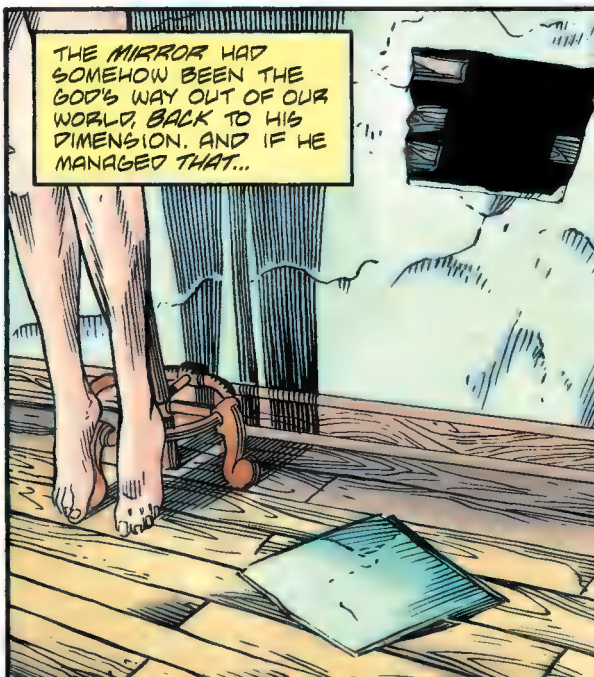

IDA WAS DEAD. HER FAMILY WAS DEAD. MARY WAS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN.
AND I HAD SEEN WHAT COULD ONLY BE THE GOD OF THE RAZOR IN THE MIRROR ON JERRY'S DRESSER.
AND THAT I WAS HANGING BY A ROPE. STRANGLING SLOWLY.
AND HERE I WAS AGAIN, SITTING ON A BED IN A HOUSE OF CARNAGE.
I FELT AS IF A CHAIR HAD BEEN KICKED OUT FROM BENEATH MY LIFE.
NOTHING SEEMED REAL.
THERE.


I FELT LIKE A PLANET THAT HAD SUDDENLY LOST ITS GRAVITY AND WAS FLYING OFF INTO SPACE. MADNESS CREPT AROUND THE PERIMETER OF MY BRAIN LIKE A BURGLAR.
IDA. SWEET IDA. GONE. BUTCHERED. MERCIFUL HEAVENS. AND BY THE GOD OF THE RAZOR.
HE WAS REAL. MARY WAS REALLY POSSESSED.


THE MORE I THOUGHT ABOUT IDA, THE MORE I HURT, AND THE MORE I FELT MYSELF BEING PULLED BACK INTO ORBIT. MY GRAVITY WAS SHAKY, BUT IT WAS RETURNING.
HAD TO. I HAD TO STAY SANE. I HAD TO PUNISH THAT THING FOR DOING THIS TO IDA. THE POLICE WOULD NEVER BELIEVE ME. THEY WOULD THINK I WAS THE KILLER. IF IT WAS GOING TO BE DONE,.. I HAD TO DO IT.

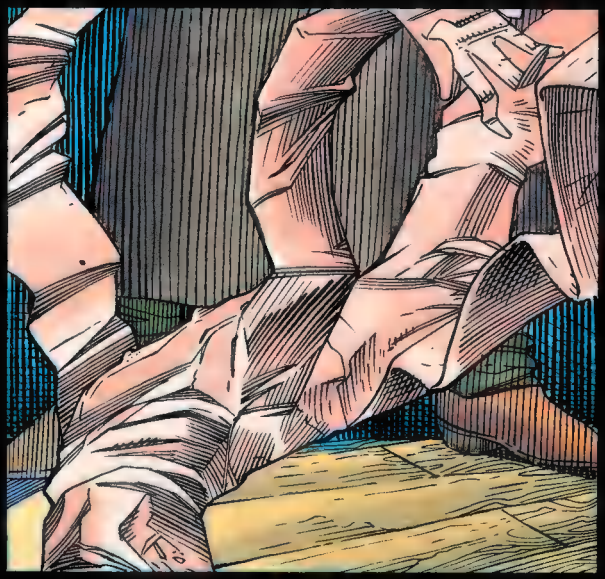

I DID WHAT I HAD FORCED MYSELF TO DO IN MARY BETH'S HOUSE, I BEGAN TO THINK RATIONALLY. LIKE THE DETECTIVE I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE.
MARY HAD WANTED THE BOOKS, HAD COME HERE, AND FOUND THEM GONE. IN HER RAGE, SHE HAD DESTROYED THE ENTIRE FAMILY. OR RATHER, THE GOD HAD... BUT--


MAYBE NOT.


THE MIRROR HAD SOMEHOW BEEN THE GOD'S WAY OUT OF OUR WORLD, BACK TO HIS DIMENSION. AND IF HE MANAGED THAT...

...IT MEANT JERRY'S PARENTS HAD NOT DISCOVERED *ALL* THE BOOKS. THERE HAD BEEN AT LEAST ONE MORE. IN ANOTHER HIDING PLACE. LIKE THE GAP IN THE WALL.

AND THE GOD OF THE RAZOR HAD GOTTEN THAT INFORMATION OUT OF JERRY BEFORE HE MADE HIM INTO A *TABLE DECORATION.*



THE BOOK WAS MADE OF HUMAN SKIN.
ITS CONTENTS WERE MAD.
THE BOOK REVEALED HOW TO ENTER THE UNIVERSE OF THE GOD OF THE RAZOR. HE COULD BE PURSUED. BUT THE METHOD... MY GOD!

IT WAS JUST TOO HORRIBLE.
I HAD TO STAY CALM. FOR IDA. I WANTED TO PUNISH THIS... THING.
I HAD TO KNOW ABOUT HIM. HAD TO UNDERSTAND HIM.
THAT MEANT I NEEDED TO LOOK CLOSER AT JUSTICE JONES'S JOURNAL. HE HAD FACED THE GOD OF THE RAZOR AND SURVIVED. I HAD SKIMMED IT EARLIER, BUT NOW I HAD TO READ EVERY WORD. KNOW WHAT I WAS UP AGAINST.
the TRUE WORDS of JUSTICE JONES Soldier and Scout as told by his ownself year of our LORD ©1876
HAD TO FIND OUT IF THE GOD COULD BE DEFEATED. KILLED.

WHAT HAPPENED TO ME NO LONGER MATTERED.
THE GOD OF THE RAZOR HAD TAKEN AWAY IDA, MY HEARTBEAT.
AND IF THAT THING HAD A HEARTBEAT, I INTENDED TO SILENCE IT.
I reckon this here story ain't gonna be thought of as the truth, since we frontier types are known as terrible liars, and if ever there was a frontier type, I'm it.
But in the year of our Lord 1876, after having had many close calls and having already lived what some would think of as an adventerous life, a thing happened to me that even I sometimes doubt. 'Cept there was another with me that knows what I'm putting down here is true.
And there's my arm.
But let me start at the beginning.

Day it started, I figured was gonna be bad anyway, but I just reckoned on 'Pache bad and that was plenty bad enough.
I headed toward the smoke, kinda circular like. Not wanting to see no 'Paches straight on, you see, cause I reckon them boys would most likely be a little too joyful on seein' me. So joyful, they might want to throw me a party.
AIIIIIII!
And I really didn't have time to stay for something like that. Being a busy man and all. 'Sides, there was screaming going on.
So I figured I'd come up on them redskins kinda private like, not wanting to do no screamin' my ownself.
Only there weren't no redskins. There was somethin' else.
Something so ugly I didn't want to fit it in my head.
TO BE CONTINUED.

IT WAITED AND THIRSTED...

For small-time gumshoe Chet Daly, the world is East Texas of the 1940s; dusty, dreary and dull... but real.

The missing person case started out as a favor for his girlfriend and seemed cut and dried — easy. Before long, however, Chet finds himself on the trail of a grisly serial killer, uncovers a collection of horrifying trophies... and learns the terrible secrets of an ancient, blasphemous book.

In Chet Daly's world, the eons-old monstrosity known as the God of the Razor can't really exist—yet how else can he explain the abhorrent events that haunt him and threaten to destroy everything he believes in and loves?

Teetering on the edge of madness, Chet is drawn ever further into a relentless swirling abyss that will sweep him across time and space, ultimately bringing him face to face with an unkillable monster.

Best-selling horror and suspense novelist Joe R. Lansdale and acclaimed artist Mark A. Nelson bring together their prodigious talents and a shared gift for the wonderfully wicked in this shocking tale of love, adventure and absolute horror.

Suggested for mature readers

SPECIAL DELIVERY

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